

35888

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

URGENT ACTION

December 17, 1971

THW
HAK

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt *HS*

SUBJECT: Memo to the President on Soviet Policy Indicators

Attached at Tab A is a memorandum for the President along the lines we discussed. It is a catalogue of diverse activities which have struck me as disturbing. No sweeping conclusion should be drawn from the listing, but it seems worth bearing in mind that whatever their motives for wanting a better relationship with the US, other Soviet interests (including internal Soviet politics) will continue to work in the other direction.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab A.

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MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

INFORMATION

December 22, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT ~~THE~~ PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*
SUBJECT: Some Indicators of Soviet Behavior *NY*

Soviet conduct in the Indo-Pak crisis has been deeply disturbing, but it can be explained to a large extent by their calculation of their regional interest in the subcontinent and relations with China. We cannot conclude that there has been some fundamental change in Moscow in their interest in a limited improvement in their relations with us. Nevertheless, reviewing a number of diverse Soviet activities underscores that Soviet policy continues along lines that are inimical to our interests, could become highly dangerous, and cut across our own efforts to reach a more durable relationship with the USSR.

The following is a catalogue of some disturbing Soviet actions and attitudes though there is no certain pattern in them.

Middle East

Within the last month we have seen (a) the shipment of medium jet bombers, armed with air-to-surface missiles; (b) the reported remarks by the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo that if the solution chosen by the UAR is war, then "we support you so that it is a war with minimum losses"; (c) a tour of the Middle East and Persian Gulf by Minister of Defense Marshal Grechko, and there are unconfirmed reports that one of his purposes is to nail down an agreement on a Soviet naval base in Somalia. (There has also been a report of renewed Soviet support of the guerrilla movement against Portuguese Guinea.)

Cuba

Castro's provocative seizure of the vessel off the Bahamas might suggest he has some Soviet support, or at least feels that he can embark on such

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dangerous actions with impunity. Moreover, while remaining within the technical limits of the understanding of last year, the Soviet flouts its spirit by (a) sending a cruise missile submarine to Havanna; (b) prolonging their current visit of an attack submarine and cruiser and conducting almost daily exercises from Cuba.

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Criticism of the US

During his visit to Denmark, Kosygin is reported to have told the Danish Prime Minister that he knew of no country where domestic conditions play so important a role in foreign policy as in the US. In commenting on your visit to Moscow, Kosygin added that he saw US domestic factors as the chief motivating force. Reports from the Embassy in Moscow on public Soviet orientation lectures concerning Soviet foreign policy reiterate this theme. In other words, the Soviets view our policy not as motivated by intrinsic national interests but by calculations of domestic political expediency.

While the Soviets have not sharply increased their accusations against us for "collusion" with China, nevertheless, this theme has become more prominent as the public explanation for various events, especially in the UN. The Soviet Ambassador in Toyko, while taking a moderate line in general, told our Ambassador that Moscow believed your trip to Peking would be a failure. If this is actually the operative estimate in Moscow, the Soviets may feel they have less reason to build up your trip to the USSR. (A side-light on Soviet attitudes was the menacing tone of Kosygin's remarks in Norway, where he is reported to have warned the Norwegians against permitting any increase of US naval activities off their own shores.)

SALT

There has been no abrupt change in the negotiations, but the tone seems to be degenerating somewhat. The Soviets persist in putting forward their proposals in the most one-sided fashion, in terms they can be virtually

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certain we will resist. Moreover, they make claims about the status of their forces (i.e., that we both have approximately the same number of ICBMs) that we know to be wildly inaccurate. Most important, one suspects that the Soviets may have made a decision to proceed with the expansion of their ABMs, and want to codify this in SALT under the guise of insisting on equality (this too could be another Soviet bargaining ploy).

The Soviet Press

Usually, the Soviet press is some guide to the intensity of Soviet policy. While not unusually different in its treatment of the US, there does seem to be very little effort to credit our good will or intentions, even prior to the Indo-Pak crisis. You personally, are excluded from criticism, but by various euphemism the Administration is belabored almost daily.

The Soviet Leaders

The Kremlinologists are satisfied that Brezhnev is still out in front, and the recent party and government meetings on the new five year plan seem to confirm this. However, since last Wednesday, all of the politburo has been out of Moscow in various cities participating in unusual regional meetings. This has only occurred three times since 1964. Almost certainly, the participation of the top leaders in regional briefings means the subject is one that either is quite complicated, or likely to create unease or resistance from the rank and file. No one knows exactly what is involved, but my guess would be the subject is foreign policy and probably China.

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Summing up, it seems fair to speculate that Soviet interest persists in better relations with us, as manifested in both Berlin and SALT and even evident to some extent in handling of their contacts with us in the Indo-Pakistan crisis, but is offset by other interests which can draw them into dangerous situations. Moreover, China is so predominant in Soviet thinking that one wonders whether another Sino-Soviet crisis similar to the border incidents in 1969 is not almost certain in the wake of the Pakistan crisis and in light of what the Soviets may see as an internal weakness in Peking. (CIA has at least one report that there were some in Moscow who would have welcomed Chinese intervention on Pakistan's side so that Moscow would have had a pretext for "delivering a blow" against China.)

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In Addition, there is the chance that having acquiesced, if not encouraged, the war in the subcontinent, the Soviets will find that they cannot very effectively argue against the use of force in the Middle East.

In both instances -- a deliberate Sino-Soviet crisis or a Middle East confrontation -- the Soviet leaders would have to weigh seriously the effect on the summit on our general relations with them. In doing so, they may now attach somewhat less importance to their relations with us than three or four months ago.

WHyland:hc:12/17/71

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